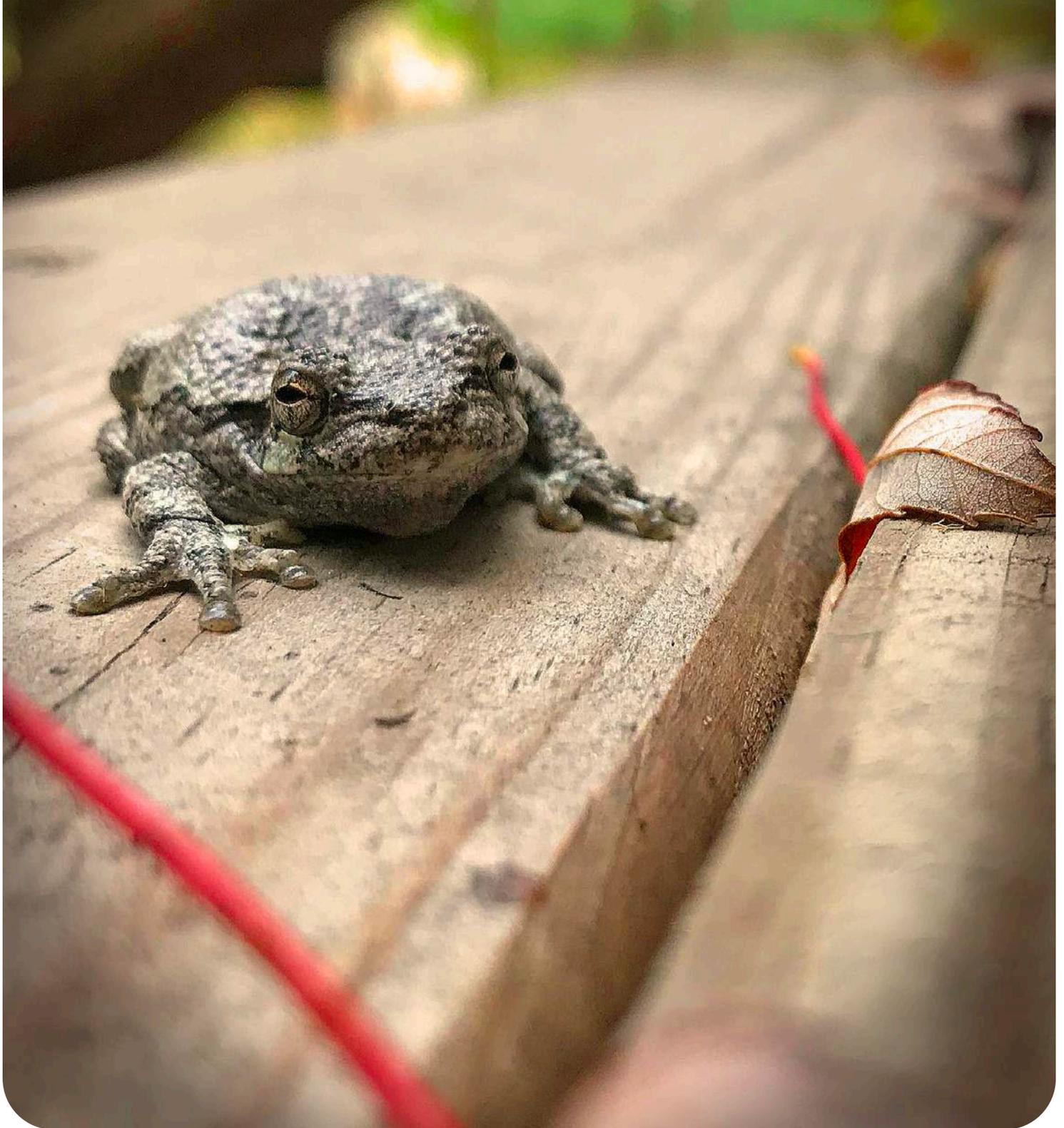




The
Rookery

FALL 2020





Melanie Coulter, Conservation Manager

Progress

While 2020 has been a year of uncertainty and change, I feel grateful for the opportunity it's given us to slow down, spend more time with family, and reconnect with our natural surroundings.

We are fortunate to live here in Northwest Ohio with access to so many special parks and nature preserves to explore. From the shoreline of Lake Erie to the Oak Openings Region and throughout the Western Basin, this region has so many different and interesting ecosystems and recreational opportunities.

As more and more people have hiked and biked local trails, paddled rivers and streams, camped and fished - the value of our open spaces has been more apparent than ever this year.

That's why we get so excited when we see the long-term results of conservation and restoration efforts in our community, like the return of the Sandhill Cranes and the presence of new generations of threatened and endangered species on the lands we protect. These discoveries keep us committed to these efforts.

We're grateful to the new H2Ohio funding that is accelerating the pace of restoration in northwest Ohio, and making it possible for us to do more to bring key habitats in this region back to a natural state with native plants that support healthier wildlife populations and reduce nutrient runoff to protect our waters.

We're grateful for partnerships with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, US Fish & Wildlife Service, local parks departments and others to help us create and manage spaces for public recreation and outdoor education.

And - most of all - we're grateful for your support in helping in protect our shared planet and the abundant resources it provides for all of us today, and for future generations.

Stay well,

Rob Krain
Executive Director



Winter is coming. I'm ready for it. I know I'm considered a little weird for this opinion, but I'm a big fan of snow and cold. Lucky for me, I've got a sturdy warm house to retreat to and plenty of hot food and warm drinks to perk me up after a day outside in the cold. But what about the wildlife that live in our nature preserves? How do they find shelter and food in the long cold winter?

Wildlife use a lot of strategies to survive winter, but they boil down to three basic options: go south, sleep it off, or just tough it out.

GO SOUTH

We all think of birds migrating south for the winter. But did you know some dragonflies migrate too? In the summer, our Little Auglaize Wildlife Reserve is teeming with dragonflies and damselflies...27 different species, in fact! Two of those species are well-known migrators: Common Green Darners and Black Saddlebags. The adults arrive here in early spring and breed in the wetlands. Their eggs hatch, and the larvae feed and grow in the shallow warm waters. They crawl from the water in late summer, split their skins and emerge as winged adults. The young adults fly south, traveling

hundreds or even thousands of miles to overwinter in Florida or Mexico, covering up to 90 miles a day!

SLEEP IT OFF

Four-toed Salamanders don't have the option of flying away from the frozen north. Instead, they rely on each other to get through the winter. The Four-toed Salamander breeds in high-quality wooded wetlands on beds of moss. But in the winter they need relatively drier forest floors. The salamanders gather in large groups with other salamander species and even frogs in overwintering sites. They cluster together and hibernate under fallen leaves, inside rotting logs or in cavities in the soil. The Four-toed Salamander is an Ohio state species of concern. Only special places like our Forrest Woods Nature Preserve have the combination of mossy shaded wetlands and mature forests that this salamander needs to live through the seasons.

TOUGH IT OUT

Finally, we have the animals that just keep living their lives through the winter, though maybe at a different pace. Tiny mammals like Meadow Voles and little birds like Chickadees eat almost constantly through the winter in order to produce enough heat

to survive the cold. Pileated Woodpeckers, a large crow-size bird, keep warm in special winter roosting cavities that they excavate in standing dead trees. They come out to eat carpenter ants and poison ivy berries during the short winter days, but stay warm in their roosts during the long winter nights. Pat & Clint Mauk's Prairie, with its 25-acre prairie nestled against a mature wood with several standing dead trees, is a great place to observe all three of these animals in the winter.

I'm looking forward to visiting these special places this winter. It's so enlightening to see the changes our preserves go through each season. I hope you'll bundle up and brave the outdoors this winter, too. Trust me and the chickadees... it's worth it!



Stay Swampy my friends,

PROTECTING HABITAT EXPANDS

©The Nature Makers

Wildlife Populations



If Misty Copeland and Michael Phelps had a bird baby, it would be a Sandhill Crane. With a wingspan of up to seven feet, Sandhill Cranes spend most of their lives pirouetting and leaping in freshwater wetlands.

The Great Lakes Region boasts the largest roosting area in the spring and summer months, but they've been largely absent from Northwest Ohio for decades. The historic Great Black Swamp that once encompassed this area spanned an estimated 1,500 square miles – more than double the area of the Okefenokee, one of the world's largest remaining intact freshwater ecosystems and a favorite wintering spot for Sandhills.

In the mid-1800s, our local swamplands were gradually drained and settled, turning this ideal habitat into productive farmland and forcing the crane population to take up residence elsewhere. Sandhill Cranes were listed as an Ohio endangered species in 1985 due to the decreased numbers resulting from habitat loss.

Efforts to preserve and restore these important wetlands began in the mid-1900s and bird populations have slowly started to return.

Since our founding in 1993, the Conservancy has been a driving force for protecting and restoring wetlands in this region. Just last year, we purchased the 226-acre Little Auglaize Wildlife Preserve in Paulding County. And, this summer we spotted a pair of Sandhill Cranes nesting in the property's restored wetlands. Sandhills don't usually breed in Ohio, but ODNR has documented over 20 pairs that are making their homes here.

Designated a sensitive species area, Little Auglaize is also home to pheasants, Chorus frogs, Midland painted turtles, river otters and Indiana bats (a federally endangered species), as well as 48 other species of birds and more than 20 species of dragonflies and damselflies.

The return of the Sandhills and the presence of these other threatened species underscore the vital importance of land preservation, recovery and restoration in supporting wildlife populations.



Photos courtesy of Scott Saunders,
The Nature Makers film,
naturemakers.com.



In 2019, Ohio set forth a bold vision to improve water quality in Lake Erie and throughout the State with the advent of the H2Ohio program. This new program is now resulting in on-the-ground work that will have long-reaching benefits.

In collaboration with partners like the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and local parks departments, the Conservancy has broken ground on three major restoration projects in the last three months.

This is the first time in the history of the organization that we've been able to start so many extensive projects at once, thanks to key grant funding from the H2Ohio water quality plan.

Collectively, these projects are budgeted to invest more than \$2 million and will restore 113 acres of land to natural habitat, supporting H2Ohio's priority of creating wetlands to reduce nutrient runoff.



H2Ohio IN ACTION-

ST. JOSEPH CONFLUENCE RECONNECTION

The east and west branches of the St. Joseph River convene on this property, which the Conservancy purchased late last year. In addition to the mature forested wetlands on site, the preserve included two agricultural areas that are now being restored.

This project – which includes the decommissioning of subsurface drainage tiles, restoration of wetlands, removal of dikes to encourage flooding, and reforestation – will have long-term benefits.

Removing dikes and restoring floodplain wetlands with native vegetation will capture nutrient laden floodwaters from the St. Joseph River and its tributaries on the property. Restoring deciduous forest will provide benefits to wildlife and absorb rainfall from storm events.

In addition to water quality benefits, this project will increase habitat for wildlife species including the federally threatened copperbelly water snake. The reptiles, found in parts of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, need shallow wetlands along the edges of larger wetlands complexes where they can hunt for frogs. They have been threatened since 1996.

RED HORSE BEND CONVERSION

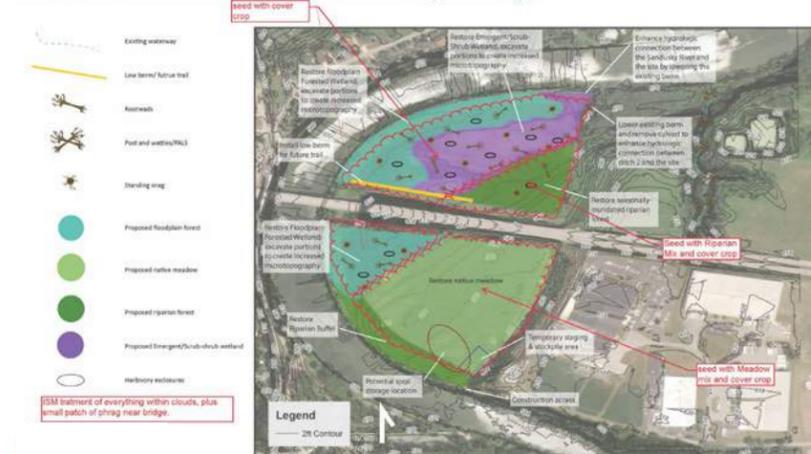
The Conservancy purchased Red Horse Bend in 2015 to restore it to natural habitats. We have been pursuing funds for this restoration project ever since and - now, with the establishment of H2Ohio, we are able to make that happen.

The property is frequently flooded by the Sandusky River, washing soil and nutrients into the river and eventually Lake Erie. This restoration will cause the property to hold water on-site, allowing new wetland vegetation to uptake nutrients

Fifty five acres are being converted from grain production to a wetland-upland complex with hydrologic connection to the river and water filtration built into the restoration design. The Conservancy's goals for this project are to increase nutrient uptake, reduce sedimentation and erosion, increase wetland habitat, and improve stream and riparian habitat.

We are working closely on this project with our partners at Sandusky County Park District and plan to open the property as a public park in 2022.

Redhorse Bend Preserve Restoration: Refined Conceptual Design



RESTORING

What's Been Lost

FORDER BRIDGE FLOODPLAIN RECONNECTION

Shortly after the Conservancy purchased the Forder Bridge site in 2016, most of the property was taken out of agricultural use and reforested with native tree plantings. This new project will create a series of “treatment chain” wetlands along a repaired stream on the property.

“The goal of this project is to slow the runoff of water from the property and allow natural vegetation to uptake nutrients and other pollutants from that water,” said the Conservancy’s Conservation Manager Melanie Coulter. “Once complete, it will help to improve water quality in the Maumee River Watershed and make a more stable ecosystem for native species.”

This property is an official launch point for the Maumee River Water Trail, and a popular location for local fishermen and boaters. We are taking advantage of having construction equipment on-site by also improving river access and the boat launch.

FUN FACT



the original Forder Bridge structure was built in 1889 and was the oldest all-steel Pratt truss in Ohio until it was dismantled in 1996 and replaced with a new bridge.



LANDSCAPING

Naturally

Quarantine stopped a lot of things this year, including our annual fundraiser, but it didn't hold us back from completing the installation of new native gardens at our Homestead. The former landscaping, which contained mostly non-native ornamental species, was removed in late 2019. The new native landscaping features more than 250 native shrubs and plugs, including:



- **A wetland swale featuring swamp milkweed and buttonbush**
- **A sandy "oak openings" habitat including prickly pear cactus and dotted horsemint**
- **Prairie species such as little bluestem, purple coneflower and dense blazing star**
- **Woodland species including spicebush and cardinal flower**

We also planted 11 fruit-bearing cherry trees along the driveway, that will provide spring forage for the property's resident honeybees.

This project was made possible by a grant from the Country Garden Club Perrysburg, which also funded a summer internship. Hannah LaPoint filled this role and helped our team care for the gardens and develop future programming.

Hannah, an environmental sciences major at the University of Toledo, said she's "learned a lot about the ecological role of Ohio's native plant species and how to identify them" and hopes to apply this knowledge to "a career in hydrogeology to create a sustainable solution to the Lake Erie algae crisis."

Native plants – those that are indigenous to a geographic region – are essential to preserving and expanding ecological biodiversity.

In addition to attracting and supporting local wildlife like bees, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles and mammals, native plants are naturally evolved in the local growing conditions and require less intervention to establish and maintain, such as fertilizer and pesticides, which helps improve local water quality.



This project was made possible by a grant from the Country Garden Club of Perrysburg, which also funded a summer internship.

Part of a larger initiative to demonstrate sustainable practices at our "Homestead" office, these native gardens will help show families how they can incorporate native species in their own yards. Other sustainable practices we've undertaken at the office space include:

- **Geothermal HVAC system installation in 2015**
- **25 KV solar system installation in 2018**

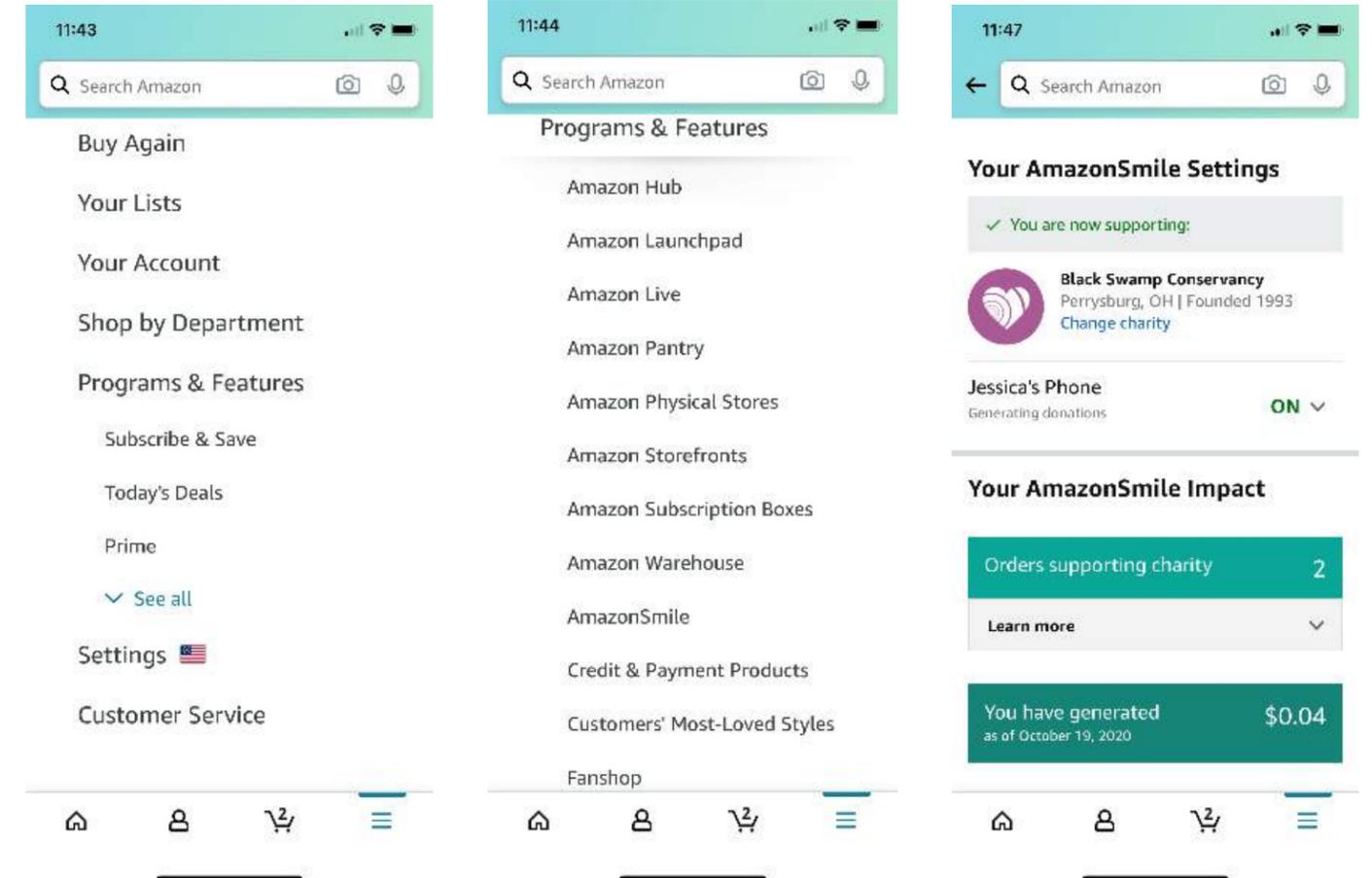
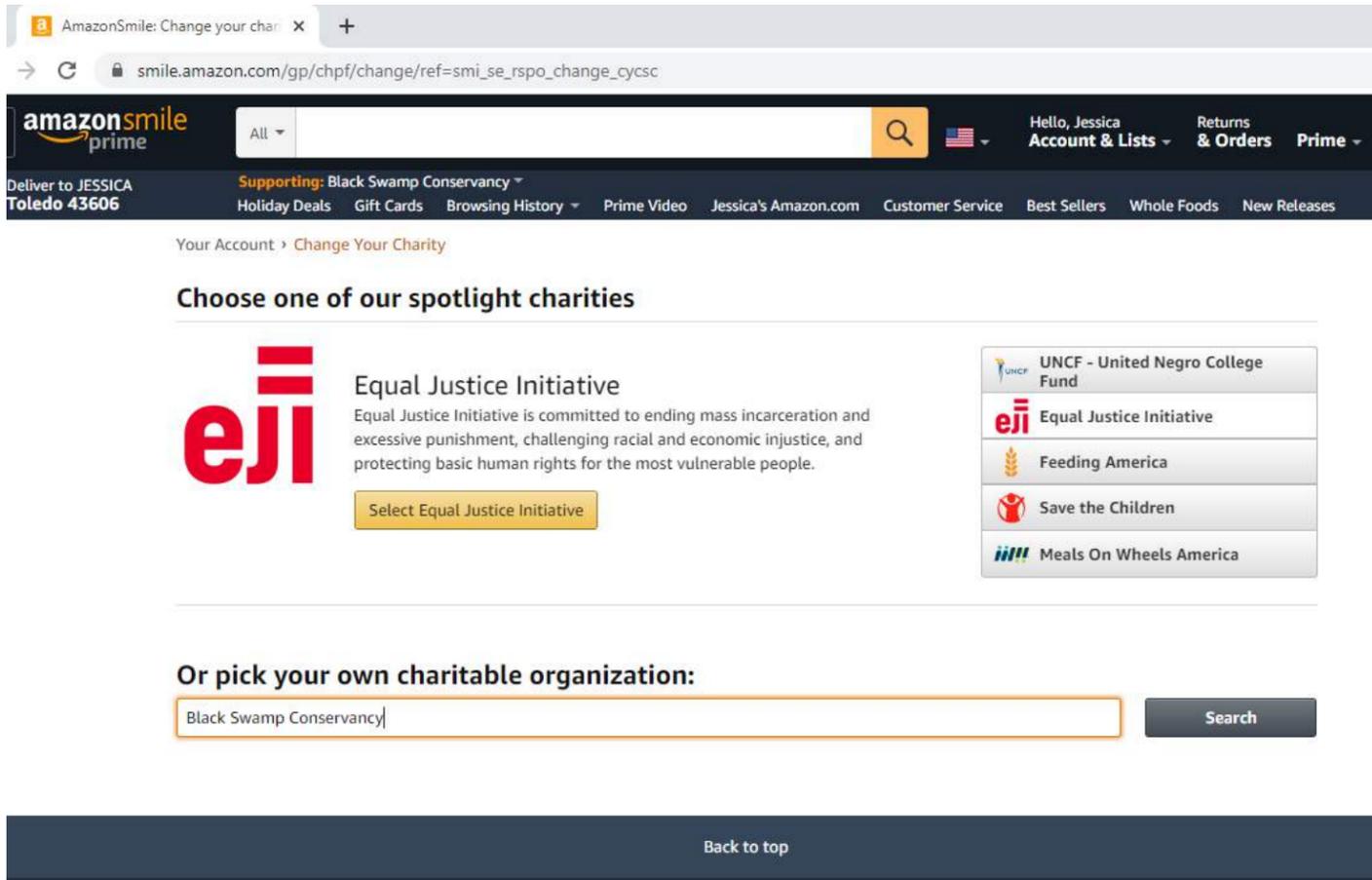
To date, the solar array has saved more than 13 tons of carbon dioxide that would have otherwise been released into the atmosphere.

We look forward to sharing these native gardens and other sustainable practices with you through public tours and educational programming when we can safely gather again.



Easy Ways to Give When

You Get



As we move into the end of what has certainly been an eventful year, we're looking forward to celebrating the holidays.

As you're shopping for your feasts and gifts, it's easy to help make conservation possible in our community.

The Kroger Community Rewards Program makes donating easy. All you have to do is link your Kroger Plus Card to Black Swamp Conservancy and swipe or scan your card when you shop. Kroger then donates a portion of your eligible purchase directly to Black Swamp Conservancy. You can find complete instructions for setting this up at KrogerCommunityRewards.com.

Amazon makes donating easy, too, through their AmazonSmile program. Just visit Smile.Amazon.com and log in to your Amazon account like you normally would. Just below the search bar at the top of the page you'll find a drop-down arrow where you can search for Black Swamp Conservancy and select our organization as your beneficiary. Then you can shop Amazon like you normally would at smile.amazon.com and the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate a portion of your eligible purchase directly to the Conservancy.

If you shop from the Amazon app on your mobile device, open the app and tap the main menu at the bottom of the screen, expand the 'Programs & Features' section, select AmazonSmile and follow the on-screen instructions to activate AmazonSmile on your device.

Now, you can support the Conservancy every time you shop for groceries, gifts and more!



THANK YOU

for all that you do, and best wishes to you and

As you're shopping for your feasts and gifts, it's easy to help make conservation possible in our community.

yours for a bountiful holiday season.



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Clean Water, Good Food, Wild Places

At Black Swamp Conservancy...

We take direct action to permanently preserve northwest Ohio's natural habitats and family farms for the benefit of future generations. By protecting our valuable land and water resources we are supporting healthy communities with strong, sustainable economies. Our work ensures the diverse habitats of our region will be protected for generations and that our children and their children will forever be able to enjoy this special place.

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Your support helps to protect and restore northwest Ohio's land and water resources, providing critical habitat for wildlife.



The
Rookery

FALL 2020

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